

THE SURPRISING DISCOVERY OF THE GENUS *YELICONES* CAMERON (HYMENOPTERA: BRACONIDAE) IN WESTERN EUROPE

M. R. SHAW

National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

Quicke & Kruff (1995), in the first of a series of papers by Quicke and various co-workers revising the world species of the genus *Yelicones*, briefly reviewed what is known of its biology, its diagnosis, and its somewhat tentative systematic placement within the subfamily Rogadinae. Having assembled much material on loan, they found the genus to be moderately rich in containing nearly 100 species and very widely distributed throughout the Old and New Worlds, but apparently absent from Western Europe—the very area where collecting activity has been most intensive through the centuries.

It was therefore a great surprise to me to find 9 specimens, all females, of *Yelicones vojnitsi* Papp collected in light traps by J. Blasco-Zumeta among the Braconidae resulting from his extended survey of all insects living in the Monegros region, a very arid steppe-like area of Zaragoza province in Spain that is characterized also by its gypsum soils. The specimen data are: "SPAIN; Zaragoza Prov. Los Monegros, Retuerta de Pina [near Pina de Ebro], 30T YL2794 [=UTM location], 10.viii.93, light. J. Blasco-Zumeta" (× 4), and as above but "20.vii.93" (× 2), "20.viii.93" (× 1), "30T YL2896, 8.vii.91" (× 1), and "30T YL3097, 10.vi.93" (× 1). Thus at least 3 separate trapping stations and five separate dates (in two different years) are involved, undoubtedly indicating a resident population. The research so far conducted on the insect fauna of the Monegros region has revealed a relatively high degree of endemism within Europe (over 100 species new to science having already been detected), and strong faunal links with the steppes of Central Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and North Africa (Blasco-Zumeta, *in litt.*).

DISTRIBUTION

Y. vojnitsi was described only recently, from Tanzania (Papp, 1992), but it has subsequently been recorded from Oman, Egypt, Niger, Senegal, Kenya, Namibia and South Africa (Quicke & Chishti, 1997). The Spanish specimens were readily identified as *Y. vojnitsi* using Quicke & Shishti (1997), and I have been able to compare them with the holotype of that species, with which they agree very closely, more so than with material from Egypt treated by Quicke & Chishti (1997) with which they were also compared. The female specimens from Zaragoza have 27–29 antennal segments.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BRACONID GENERA

Among genera of Braconidae known from Europe *Yelicones* can be readily recognized by the following combination of characters: inner side of eyes distinctly emarginate; all tarsal claws coarsely pectinate; fore and mid tarsi extremely shortened, especially the 2nd, 3rd and 4th tarsomeres, and telotarsus enlarged; ovipositor not or hardly exerted. In addition *Yelicones* has a distinct low and wide hypoclypeal depression, strongly rotated mandibles bearing a small

third tooth, and vein m-cu present in the hind wing. The habitus (Fig. 1) is highly distinctive, and *Y. vojnitsi* is ca. 4–5 mm in length.

HOST ASSOCIATIONS

The host of *Y. vojnitsi* is unknown, but the genus is probably associated with Pyralidae (Quicke & Kruft, 1995), either largely or exclusively, and anyone having the opportunity to collect and rear larvae of this lepidopteran family in the Monegros region (where almost 100 pyralid species are known to occur; J. Blasco-Zumeta, *in litt.*) or other arid areas in Europe is strongly encouraged to do so! The host larva would be killed and mummified (possibly as a prepupa) by the parasitoid, which would pupate inside the mummy and later emerge as an adult from its caudal end.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Wanted

Records of *Thecla betulae* (L.) (Lycaenidae) in Ireland—In connection with the preparation of an article on the distribution of *T. betulae* (brown hairstreak) in Ireland any records would be gratefully received and acknowledged. Please contact: Michael O'Sullivan, 20 St James Gardens, Killorglin, Co Kerry, Ireland.